NOVAG (R) G O M O K U (R) C O M P U T E R

INSTRUCTIONS

Congratulations on your purchase of the NOVAG GOMOKU Computer. Your entire family will find it easy to learn and a great challenge to master it.

GOMOKU is Japan's most popular board game. Its origin can be traced back many centuries and it has entertained generations of Gomoku players.

Oriental philosophy teaches that the aim of a game is not just to win, but to win in spite of your opponent seeing every threat and being warned about it. The same challenging philosophy applies to GOMOKU. You win a GOMOKU game by wits and strategy, not by chance.

RULE

GOMOKU is played by 2 players on a 13 x 13 board, one player playing black, the other white. Black always starts, and the players place a stone of their colour alternately on any point of intersection.

The only rule to remember is contained in the word GOMOKU. GO means five and MOKU stones. The game is won when a player forms a line of exactly five of his stones either horizontally, vertically or diagonally. Making a move which lines up more than five of his stones does not count as a victory. In the rare occasion that the board is full and no player can win, the game is ruled a draw.

It is customary to warn your opponent if you are about to win and you may find the following comments on the basic game strategy of GOMOKU helpful.

BASIC GAME STRATEGY

It is evident that as soon as a player gets 4 stones in a line which is open on either end, he wins the game because his opponent can stop him from forming a Five only on one end and he can then complete the Five on the other.

Consequently, a player threatens to win the game whenever he gets 3 stones in a row in such a way that on the next move he could form a Four which is open on both ends. It is customary to call 'Three' in such a case, so that the opponent will not forget to stop the formation of the open Four, because there is no fun in winning a game owing to a blunder of the opponent.

To arrive at a double threat one would have to form either 2 Fours simultaneously, or 2 Threes which both lead to open Fours, or a Four and an open Three.

How to Play with the GOMOKU Computer

Having a computer as your opponent offers more features than a game against a human opponent, especially training features. Depending on your playing strength, you can choose between 9 skill levels. You can also ask the computer for move suggestions in difficult positions, trace back and forward through your game, take back moves, set up difficult positions, etc.

Batteries

The NOVAG GOMOKU Computer runs on six 1,5V C-Type batteries (not included). To insert the batteries, open the BATTERY DOOR on the bottom of the computer and place the batteries as indicated by the + and - signs. A set of new alkaline batteries runs approx. for 18 - 20 hours.

Battery-Low-Indicator

If the batteries are down to approx. 20% of their original capacity, the flashing of the LED-lights will become markedly faster. The batteries should be changed soon, otherwise the computer's operation will become irregular.

Adaptor

The GOMOKU Computer can run with the NOVAG Adaptor Art. No. 8220 which is separately available. Before using the adaptor check that the voltage of your electric output is within the range specified on the adaptor label. The adaptor socket is at the back panel of your computer. The use of another adaptor automatically invalidates the warranty.

1. Starting to Play

The GOMOKU Computer has a 13 x 13 SENSOR BOARD for greatest ease of play. Along the board are 13 x 13 row and column LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes) which are marked alpha-numerically. Each intersection of the board can be called out by 1 row and 1 column LED.

Underneath all intersections are electronic sensors, that register your move automatically once you place a stone and press it down lightly. The best way to activate a sensor is to press down with the corner of a stone and then place it on the desired intersection. The row and column LEDs will light up briefly and a beep confirms your entry.

Moves to be executed for the computer are indicated by 1 lit row and column LED. Place a stone for the computer on that intersection. A beep confirms your entry.

To start, switch the computer on. Note that the On/Off switch at the back panel of the computer is marked 'Adaptor-Off-Battery'. To switch the computer on, either slide the switch to 'Adaptor' or to 'Battery' respective of your power source.

Press NEW GAME and the Black LED lights up. You automatically play black and the computer white. Black has the advantage of placing the first stone. (For CHANGE COLOUR see para. 2). The Black LED is now on, indicating that you can place your first stone. Place it on the intersection of your choice and press it down lightly. The row and column LEDs of this intersection light up briefly and a short beep indicates that the computer has registered your move.

Now the White LED comes on showing that the computer has started to compute its countermove. When it has found it, you will hear a beep. Place a white stone on the intersection indicated by the 2 lit row and column LEDs and press it down lightly. Again a short beep tone indicates that the computer has registered the entry and the Black LED will light up again indicating that it is now your move again.

2. Change of Colour

If you want the computer to play black from the start of a game, press GO to call off a computer move. Once you have executed this move for the computer you play automatically white.

If you wish to change the colour during a game, call off a computer move by pressing GO instead of entering your next move. The computer will then play your previous colour, whereby you play the previous computer colour.

3. WARNING KEY

If pressed once at the beginning or during a game, the WARNING LED will light up during the entire game, unless switched off again by pressing the key a second time. If on, it flashes when the computer has one or more open Threes or one or more Fours or any combination of Threes and Fours, indicating that you are in danger of being beaten.

4. LEVEL KEY (Setting the Skill Level)

The GOMOKU Computer has 9 skill levels. Level 1 is the easiest, level 9 the most difficult one. The higher the skill level, the more time the computer will use to execute deeper analysis of positions and possibilities, and thus play a better game. The computer's search time can be interrupted by pressing GO, to generate a move instantly.

Every time the computer is switched on, it will automatically be on level 1. You can change the skill level after you have pressed NEW GAME or at any time during the game when it is your turn to move. The skill levels are shown by the LEDs 1-9. The number of LEDs coming up is equal to the level presently set. Every time you press level you increase the level by 1. When you have reached level 9 and you press LEVEL again, you go back to level 1. Once you have set the desired skill level, press GO to enter it and you can begin/ continue your game.

5. TRACE BACK - TRACE FORWARD

The GOMOKU Computer offers the unique possibility to take back any number of moves to enable you in practice games to rectify an earlier mistake or to review the game from an earlier position by tracing back and forward move by move through your entire game.

To take back moves, wait until you have executed the computer's move and then proceed as follows: Press TRACE BACK and the row and column LEDs will show the computer's last move and the ERROR LED will flash. Press this stone and take it off the board. The LEDs will disappear.

Every time you press TRACE BACK the computer will show the previous move and you have to remove the indicated piece. Once you have traced back to the desired position, you can continue to play a different game. Check which colour is to move. If it is the computer's turn, you call off a move by pressing GO, if it is your turn, just make your move.

If you want to trace forward again to the position from where you left off, press TRACE FORWARD for each move. Every time you press TRACE FORWARD, the row and column LEDs of the next move light up and the Black and White LED will indicate which colour is to play.

Note: If you or the computer has made a move after a Take Back you cannot trace forward anymore, as the taken back moves are erased.

6. HINT Key (Move Suggestions)

Pressing HINT when it is your turn to move, will show a recommended move. Pressing it again will show another move and so forth. The LEDs indicating the move can be ignored if you do not wish to take the hint. You may place your stone anywhere and play on as usual.

7. SOUND Key

The sound may be switched on or off. When on, every board press will result in a short beep and the computer will beep after it has determined its move.

With the sound off, there will be a beep only when an error has occurred (e.g. when pressing the wrong intersection for a computer move).

8. VERIFY/SET UP Key

Pressing this key once gets you into the VERIFY Mode and the VERIFY LED lights up. Pressing it twice gets you into the SET UP Mode and the SET UP LED lights up.

a)
VERIFY is used to check if your board position corresponds with the computers internal memory, as it can happen that a stone was accidentally moved or white and black stones got mixed up. So, if the ERROR LED flashes during normal play, or the computer does not announce a win although your board position shows a winning position chances are, that there was a mix-up somewhere during play.

Press VERIFY after you have executed a computer move. Now press one stone after the other and the row and column LEDs come up and the BLACK and WHITE LEDs will indicate the colour of each stone.

If you find a discrepancy, correct it according to the colour indications of the computer, as you can be sure that they are correct.

If you press a stone and the ERROR LED lights up, this means that the computer has not registered any stone on this intersection. Remove the stone and press on the neighbouring empty intersections. As soon as a Colour LED lights up instead of the ERROR LED, you have found the intersection from which the stone was accidentially moved.

In order to get out of VERIFY, press GO and you can continue your game.

b)
In SET UP Mode you can enter a special board position, e.g. to have the computer solve difficult problems or to continue an interrupted game..

Before you switch the computer on, place the black and white stones on the board in the desired formation. Switch the computer on, press NEW GAME and VERIFY/SET UP twice to go into Set Up Mode. The SET UP LED lights up as well as the BLACK LED.

Enter the position of all black stones by pressing them lightly. A beep will confirm each entry. Then change to white by pressing CHANGE COLOUR and enter all white pieces. Finish the SET UP by pressing GO.

The computer will indicate which colour is to move. If you want to play this colour, place a stone. Otherwise press GO and call off a computer move.

9. GO Key

The different functions of the GO Key are explained in Paras. 2, 4, 5 and 8.

10. ERROR LED

The ERROR LED lights up, if you are trying to place a stone for the computer on a different intersection than indicated by the row and column LEDs and you will hear a lower beep. The row and column LEDs now show the incorrect intersection. Press the stone once more on this intersection and the correct row and column LEDs appear again. Place the stone on the correct intersection and the mistake is corrected.

Further functions of the ERROR LED are explained in Paras 8 a) and b).

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